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RUEHFR/AMEMBASSY PARIS 0483  
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TAGS: [PREF](#) [PGOV](#) [MR](#) [IS](#)

SUBJECT: MFA SAYS RELATIONSHIP WITH ISRAEL WILL REMAIN  
INTACT

REF: NOUAKCHOTT 443

Classified By: Ambassador Mark M. Boulware for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

1.(C) On August 21 Ba Samba Mamadou, the Deputy Director for American and Asian Affairs at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA), called on the Embassy to disavow a recent press report suggesting that Libyan leader Muammar Qaddafi had offered to off-set Israeli assistance to Mauritania provided General Abdel Aziz agreed to severe diplomatic relations with Israel.

The report, carried by the local Arabic language newspaper Al-Akhbar, was attributed to an anonymous source within the MFA and relayed a supposed conversation between Qadhafi and High State Council (HCE) member General Ghazawni (Ref. A).

2.(C) Ba indicated that he was acting on orders directly from Gen. Aziz to reassure the U.S. that the Al-Akhbar report was unfounded and that Gen. Aziz had no intention of severing relations with Israel. Ba said that in his personal opinion, respect for diplomatic relations with Israel was ingrained within the Mauritanian military. He also said that President Abdallahi was under a lot of pressure from Muslim groups to revisit Mauritania's traditional relationship with Israel and the military, and Gen. Aziz in particular, was better placed to serve as a guardian for Mauritania's ties to Israel.

3.(C) Comment: The Mauritians -- under either Abdallahi or Aziz -- continue to see the Israeli relationship as perhaps THE most important U.S. foreign policy concern in Mauritania.

On several occasions Abdallahi promised to refer the question of diplomatic relations with Israeli to the National Assembly for a vote, but never actually followed through. After reading the Al-Akhbar article on August 20, the Embassy asked Ba if there was any substance to the report. Ba referred the query to his superiors and received a response, within 24 hours, apparently directly from General Aziz along with orders to deliver the message to the Embassy immediately. The junta is likely to try to use the relationship as a card to get the U.S. to ease its opposition to the coup.  
Boulware